

**AGORA, Portal for
Parliamentary Development**



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Welcome to the fourth AGORA Bulletin!

AGORA, the Portal for Parliamentary development, is proud to present its fourth bulletin.

AGORA is a multilateral initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank Institute (WBI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

This biannual bulletin presents the latest information, knowledge and activities in the field of parliamentary development, and keeps you informed of recent activities in this expanding field. For more information, we invite you to consult AGORA at www.agora-parl.org, or visit our partner institutions.

If you want to contribute or have any questions, please mail to:
newsletter@agora-parl.org

Parliamentary digest

To find out what has happened these past months, [click here](#).

Recent Resources

To consult the latest and upcoming resources in our library, [click here](#).

Calendar

To view the complete calendar of upcoming events, [click here](#).

Area of Expertise



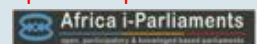
Environment and Climate Change. “The world is facing severe challenges related to climate change and the exploitation of environmental resources, leading to a surge in attention for the impact of environmental affairs on development strategies. While environment and climate change were notoriously absent from the Millennium Development Goals, the international community has since made significant strides in promoting more environment-sensitive policy tools. Initiatives such as Rio+20 further anchor the....” [Click here to read more](#)

Chronicle



Badredine Abdelkefi, Deputy Chairman to the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly. “The Tunisian revolution sparked the Arab spring, restoring dignities and freedom of our citizens who were able to participate in the first free and fair elections in Tunisia on the 23rd of October 2011. As a member of the National Constituent Assembly, I believe that this crucial participation needs to be fortified for citizens to play a more efficient role in shaping Tunisia’s future. After the revolution successfully ousted the old corrupt regime...” [Click here to read more](#)

Special Report



Africa i-Parliaments: “Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan is an Africa-wide initiative to empower African Parliaments to better fulfil their democratic functions by supporting their efforts to become open, participatory, knowledge-based and learning organisations” [Click here to read more](#)





Kevin Deveaux
Parliamentary Development Policy Advisor UNDP

Welcome to the latest edition of the AGORA biannual Newsletter. We are excited to see the continued growth and breadth in use of the web portal. We started this portal as a joint venture in 2010 amongst donors, multi-lateral organizations and international NGOs to provide one location on the web where parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and development practitioners could go to find current news and recent documents and to discuss amongst themselves how to make parliaments around the world more accessible, open and accountable. As a small community within international development, knowing you have access to support, information and advice from others can be a lifeline for many as they pursue the goal of stronger and more effective parliaments.

In this issue, we take a look at the Arab Spring, one year later, through the eyes of a Tunisian MP. Much has changed in the region since January 2011 when Tunisia ignited the awakening. The road to democracy is neither easy nor short, but it does lead through an elected legislature. In Tunisia, that is the Constituent Assembly and we take a look at the challenges facing Tunisia as the Assembly tackles the details of a transition.

Increasing attention is also being directed towards the role of parliaments in the field of climate change and the environment. By definition, parliaments are created to shape the frameworks that can deal with such pressing issues, and to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups in society. These institutions can be a force for good if they have the resources and capacity to fulfill their core functions. AGORA recently created more space dedicated to this important and growing area of work to

ensure its members have access to cutting-edge ideas and knowledge.

We also reflect upon the launch of the *Global Parliamentary Report* – a recent and ambitious joint venture of UNDP and the IPU. The report considers the relationship between parliamentarians and the citizens they represent. Through both parliamentary institutions and as individual MPs, parliamentarians are adjusting to a more demanding electorate with new tools. The Report attempts to identify some key findings from the significant research undertaken globally. Agora was proud to be involved in the research for the Report and sees this partnership as crucial in promoting the findings.

One of the findings of the *Global Parliamentary Report* was the key role ICT is playing in connecting citizens to their parliaments and MPs. In this edition of the Newsletter, AGORA explores the use of ICT by parliaments in Africa through the *Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan* and by considering two regional initiatives supported through the plan that are changing the way parliaments document their work.

Finally, AGORA wants to acknowledge and thank the growing list of members that are making the web portal for parliaments the “go to” site for information about parliaments and the ongoing work to build their capacity.

Welcome to the conversation and we hope you enjoy the content and stay engaged.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Deveaux'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.



13 - 19 November, 2011: Southern Africa Development Community of Public Accounts Committees (SADCOPAC) - SADCOPAC Annual Seminar (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe)

SADCOPAC is an autonomous and independent organization established as a permanent institution in order to foster the exchange of ideas and experience among Public Accounts Committees on the oversight function within the member countries.

This particular SADCOPAC seminar provided a forum for south-south knowledge exchange between SADCOPAC member states on good practice for parliamentary oversight of budgets.

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23 - 25 November, 2011: The Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) - Training Course in Parliamentary Work

AWEPA organized a three-day long training course for parliamentary staff, focusing on parliamentary work. The course was facilitated by two Mozambican experts and two others from the United Kingdom. This module examined the defining characteristics of a parliamentary service, what principles and values it should be based on and what services it should aim to provide. It examined how those principles are translated into specific activities focusing on supporting the oversight and scrutiny responsibilities of parliaments, with particular emphasis on effective support for committee work.

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29 November - 11 December, 2011: 4th High Level Forum on Aide Effectiveness (Busan, South Korea)

During the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, over 70 parliamentarians from over 60 countries met to discuss the role of parliaments in aid. The Forum adopted a statement in which participants unequivocally asserted that parliaments should be recognized as key State institutions involved in the aid process. They also discussed how to maintain the relevance of the aid effectiveness agenda in the context of the evolving development landscape. The Forum culminated in the signing of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation by ministers of developed and developing nations, emerging economies, providers of South-South and triangular co-operation and civil society, marking a critical turning point in development co-operation.

[Read more...](#)

5 - 11 February, 2012: World Bank Institute (WBI) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) - The 7th Residential Summer School for Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees (Australia)

The Summer School brought together approximately 44 parliamentarians from the South Asia region, and provided an opportunity to discuss building effective Public Accounts Committees as the Parliament's primary means of financial scrutiny of the Executive.

It combined both the theoretical and the practical, with a four-day retreat style training course. The Summer School was aimed at Chairs and Members of Public Accounts Committees, Auditors-General and Audit Office staff, and Public Accounts Committees staffs, as well as parliamentarians and parliamentary practitioners.

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5 - 30 March, 2012: World Bank Institute (WBI) - Parliaments and the Budget Course (Online)

In March, The World Bank Institute offered a core course, which instructed members of the parliamentary community on how legislatures ensure that the budget optimally matches a nation's needs with available resources. The course discussed topics relevant to parliamentarians, such as the budget process, strengthening parliamentary involvement and opening up of the parliamentary process.

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6 – 8 March 2012: COPA - 24th Meeting of Executive Committee of COPA (San José, Costa Rica)

The Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), celebrating its 15th anniversary this year, held its 24th Executive Committee meeting in March. The occasion provided the opportunity to further advance the work of the six standing committees through presentations and discussions on specific legislative realities.

The discussions focused on working out public policies to improve the lot of peoples in the Americas, as well as strengthening parliamentary democracies. Women's issues were particularly thematic, as the meeting fell just before International Women's Day.

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15 - 16 March, 2012: World Water Forum - The Parliamentarian Process (Marseille, France)

The world's largest meeting regarding water resources, the World Water Forum mobilizes the public and private sector to tackle water resource issues. During the Forum, a one-and-a-half day Parliamentarian Session provided a unique platform for exchange and cooperation between parliamentarians from all regions of the world.

The session aimed to strengthen parliamentarians' capacities and reinforce their decisive role in supporting water and sanitation issues within political arenas at national, regional and international levels. A Parliamentarian Declaration has been submitted within the Forum and includes key messages to take to Rio+20 and beyond.

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14 - 16 March, 2012: Meeting of Parliamentarians of Countries Most Vulnerable to Climate Change: Beyond Durban (Dhaka, Bangladesh)

In the face of failing communication on climate change, at both national and international levels, parliamentarians are in a unique position to influence decision-making, promote policies and legislation, and generate countrywide and international mobilisation in meeting the challenges of climate change. With this in mind, parliamentarians and practitioners gathered in Dhaka to discuss the role of parliament in climate change adaptation. The programme took an integral approach and analysed links between climate change, global peace, sustainable development and the achievement of MDGs

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2 April, 2012: United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Launch of The Global Parliamentary Report (Kampala, Uganda)

This April, the first Global Parliamentary Report (GPR), which examines “The Changing Nature of Parliamentary Representation”, was launched in Kampala, Uganda. The report argues that to address the current low-level of trust in them, parliaments must engage with citizens, stay closely attuned to their needs and make every effort to meet them.

The report, in which more than 125 parliaments and 660 members of parliament participated, aims to help both legislative assemblies and politicians better understand and respond to the public pressures they are facing.

[Read more...](#)



16 – 20 April, 2012: West Africa Association of Public Accounts Committees (WAAPAC) - 3rd Annual General Meeting & Conference (Monrovia, Liberia)

In partnership with the Parliamentary Centre and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the World Bank Institute, WAAPAC organized their 3rd Annual conference with the aim to enhance WAAPAC members' knowledge on public financial management and the budget process as well as promote development, adoption and implementation of national multi-stakeholder action plans for reform. The theme of the conference was curbing corruption and promoting transparency in public financial management.

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17 - 19 April, 2012: The Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (the Parliamentary Network) - World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings (Washington, D.C., USA)

In April, the Parliamentary Network participated in Spring Meetings with a delegation from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In the workshop, parliamentarians had the opportunity to discuss several issues with World Bank and IMF officials and partners, exploring topics that included parliamentary action regarding Rio+20, the use of parliamentary benchmarks, and the world economic outlook.

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30 April - 2 May 2012: National Democratic Institute (NDI) and National Endowment for Democracy - PMO Leaders Conference on Parliamentary Transparency and Networking (Washington, D.C., USA)

To help provide a platform for cooperation among PMOs, NDI and the National Endowment for Democracy co-hosted a two-and-a-half-day conference in Washington, D.C. for global PMO leaders. The conference fostered discussion on international strategies for improving access to parliamentary information on the national level, including a transparency “pledge” for parliaments, which was available for comment on the AGORA web portal in advance of the conference.

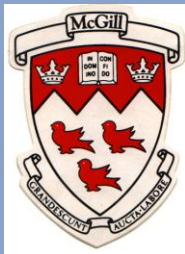
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9 May 2012: Parliamentarians for the Americas - the Annual Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians (Valparaíso, Chile)

The annual gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians, which held the theme "citizen security for women, a parliamentary task," was held in May. The parliamentary meeting was inaugurated by the Ecuadorian Assembly woman Linda Machuca, President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians, Chilean Deputy Monica Zalaquett and the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Nicolás Monckeberg. The participating parliamentarians discussed issues of inclusion of women in political life in the American states, and the defense of women facing gender violence.

[Read more...](#)



11 June – 15 June 2012 : McGill University and the World Bank Institute – An International Executive Program For Parliamentary Staff (Montreal, Canada)

Recognizing that parliamentary staff are the “corporate memory” and procedural experts of Parliaments, the WBI and McGill University’s Institute for the Study of International Development have launched an 18-month program for parliamentary staff. The aim of this joint venture is to fill the gap of that exists in the realm of professional development for parliamentary staff.

The program began in June with a one week Residency held in Montreal, where 27 participants from nearly a dozen countries convened, and will continue with seven advanced-level e*learning courses, which begin in July.

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15 – 17 June 2012: UNDP & GLOBE – 1st World Summit of Legislators (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

With the support of UNDP, UNEP and GEF, GLOBE convened the **World Summit of Legislators**, involving over 300 senior legislators from more than 80 countries. GLOBE's intention is that the 1st World Summit of Legislators will mark the beginning of a new international process - to convene every two years - that will strengthen the engagement of legislators across the Rio agenda.

The World Summit of Legislators focused on three priority areas: scrutiny - to strengthen legislators' oversight of governments performance on the Rio agenda; legislation – to develop and advance legislation in support of sustainable development; and promoting the valuation of natural capital in government accounting and decision making.

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Badredine Abdelkefi is Deputy Chairman to the National Constituent Assembly of Tunisia and is in charge of relations with citizens, civil society, and Tunisians abroad. He graduated from the faculty of Science of Sfax in 1982 where he obtained a Master in Science.

In 1991 he was condemned to 11 years in prison; he was accused of creating an illegal organization under the regime of Ben Ali. After the Revolution, he was elected as General Secretary of Ennahda party in the South and he became a member of the National Constituent Assembly.

A *s a parliamentarian, what do you think can be done to strengthen the effectiveness of parliaments in the Arab world today?*

The Tunisian revolution sparked the Arab spring, restoring dignities and freedom of our citizens who were able to participate in the first free and fair elections in Tunisia on the 23rd of October 2011. As a member of the National Constituent Assembly, I believe that this crucial participation needs to be fortified for citizens to play a more efficient role in shaping Tunisia's future. After the revolution successfully ousted the old corrupt regime, it demanded that the Tunisian citizens, whether they are employees of the public sector or members of the civil society, participate forcefully in rebuilding the country. To strengthen the role of citizens we need to support civil society as well as individual initiatives; we need to reinforce the collaboration with civil society to ensure that the demands of the public are heard. By doing so, citizens will feel that the future of the country is that of all Tunisians, and not just that of the existing institutions and elected bodies.

“To fight corruption successfully, we need to ensure true representation, the freedom of media, and the independence of Justice. However, our efforts will remain insufficient if they are not complemented by a vibrant civil society.”

What is your opinion on the role of parliamentarians in fighting corruption in Tunisia?

One of the most important slogans of the revolution was fighting corruption. Tunisia was a dictatorship, and oppression and corruption were intertwined. Today, fighting corruption is a priority. Removing the figureheads of corruption alone is not enough. Continuous effort is needed to reform all sectors, and to allow them to work according to the revolution's goals: achieving development, equality, and social justice. One of the most important issues enabling us to fight corruption is the promotion of freedom in Tunisia. The first free and fair elections held were the starting point for fighting corruption. The next step is to provide a legal framework that protects the freedom and independence of the media, and ensures the independence of the judiciary to curb the possibility of corruption taking hold of the system once again.

To fight corruption successfully, we need to ensure true representation, the freedom of media, and the independence of Justice. However, our efforts will remain insufficient if they are not complemented by a vibrant civil society - only the presence of a strong network of CSOs that continuously engage in oversight will render the return of corruption impossible. The role of the institutions, whether legislative or executive, is to provide a suitable environment that encourages civil society, fosters synergies and networking, provides open channels for communication and ensures that public voices are heard. Doing so will block attempts to endanger citizens' interests. Finally, a legal framework that puts in place a system for fighting corruption and the protection of the different sectors is crucial.

Civil Society Organisations give important information to parliamentarians so that they are better able to exercise their oversight of the state institutions. What role can CSOs play with parliaments?

The role that the civil society organizations play is one of continuous communication and engagement with their representatives. Today, as members of the National Constituent Assembly, we are working towards providing the needed mechanisms to communicate with all CSOs in different sectors and ensure a framework that future parliaments following this transitional phase can benefit from. The MP and the assembly should be open to all initiatives of the civil society.



CSOs on the other hand should first collaborate and promote synergies to achieve agreed upon goals in various sectors.

Second, CSOs should take initiatives to encourage parliamentarians to communicate with them. We are currently working according to a plan set by the Assembly's bureau to strengthen the role of CSOs and their relations with the Assembly. Therefore, we emphasize the importance of including citizens in the changes witnessed in our country, whether at the level of drafting the constitution, drafting laws, or overseeing the executive. We actively work on strengthening civil society, including all its components and organizations, to empower them

to play a role in shaping Tunisia's future. In order to ensure this collaboration, we are working on a legal framework that protects the independence of CSOs in Tunisia, and fosters an inclusive environment for continuous participation and oversight of what is happening in our country.

“To strengthen the role of citizens we need to support civil society as well as individual initiatives; we need to reinforce the collaboration with civil society to ensure that the demands of the public are heard.”



In the framework of the UNDP project 'Support to the Constitutional and parliamentary process and to the National Dialogue in Tunisia', a study visit took place in Brussels from the 12th to the 15th June 2012, of a parliamentary delegation from Tunisia. The topic of the visit was on the dialogue between civil society and the Parliament. The study visit consisted in exchanges with the different Parliamentary Assemblies based in Brussels, and aimed to facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building regarding the processes fostering the dialogue between the citizens and their representatives. The experience of the Belgian representatives regarding the long and difficult institutional and constitutional reforms proved relevant, particularly as regards to the role that parliamentarians can play to resolve conflict, lower tensions and foster the dialogue between the different political and social groups.



ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS

This is a compilation of AGORA's latest Area of Expertise on 'Environment and Climate Change', available in full at www.agora-parl.org/environmentclimatechange.

The world is facing severe challenges related to climate change and the exploitation of environmental resources, leading to a surge in attention for the impact of environmental affairs on development strategies. While environment and climate change were notoriously absent from the Millennium Development Goals, the international community has since made significant strides in promoting more environment-sensitive policy tools. Initiatives such as Rio+20 further anchor the conviction that these issues are key to successful development.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Parliamentarians can strengthen national capacity for renewable energy in a sustainable manner, specifically by drawing up and implementing national policies, strategies and programmes. They can create political will to push for renewables, introduce tariffs and subsidies favorable for renewable energy, and stimulate the debate.

Read more about parliaments and renewable energy at <http://www.agora-parl.org/renewableenergy>.

Legislators, too, are aware that successful development policies are inexorably linked to environmental issues

such as energy security, deforestation and desertification, water security, natural disasters such as flooding and hurricanes, and so on. When outlining the strategic development vision of a country, parliaments increasingly try to ensure that this vision integrates environmental issues in an efficient, sustainable manner.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In most developing countries, including many of whom are not fully democratic, the parliament has a key role to play in both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Most countries need to lower their GHG emissions as well as reduce their vulnerabilities.

Read more about parliaments and climate change at www.agora-parl.org/climatechange.

Parliamentarians have a wide range of tools at their disposal to help reduce carbon emissions while ensuring energy access for all. They have a key role to play in setting the development vision for a country and in developing environmental policies concerning mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. In addition, parliaments are active on climate change and environmental affairs through their three core functions:

As a lawmaking institution, parliament is responsible for developing the legal framework that governs environmental affairs. This involves designing legislation to protect natural habitats, to facilitate and stimulate research and development on renewable energy, to manage industries related to the forestry and energy sector, and so forth. Parliament also has a key role when it comes to the ratification of international treaties.

As an oversight body, parliament holds the government accountable for its execution of laws and policies. Parliament can assume this role as a watchdog through question periods, conducting public hearings and inviting government officials to testify before committees. Moreover, parliament plays a key role in the budgetary cycle by securitizing the expenditure and revenue proposals of the executive and its implementation.



“Improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewables can promote sustainable development, allowing people to enjoy essential energy services while consuming less fuel and generating lower emissions.”

An example of this is Uganda, where MPs (aligned in the Climate Parliament network) succeeded in making access to energy the ‘9th Millennium Development Goal’ for the country.

As a representative institution, parliament channels the views of the population to the relevant government actors. This includes a healthy and constructive collaboration with citizens, including Civil Society Organisations, women, indigenous peoples and citizens in general, to ensure that government decisions reflect the perspectives of all concerned.

To explore the role of parliaments in the field of climate change and environment in more detail, please consult www.agora-parl.org/environmentclimatechange.

COMING SOON: A new Area of Expertise on ‘Parliaments and Extractive Industries’ will be published soon. Please check www.agora-parl.org for the latest updates.



While diplomats and governments continue to negotiate, the Climate Parliament Council believes legislators should pursue a parallel track: to build our way out of the climate problem. Legislators have the power to solve the climate problem by passing legislation in their home parliaments and influence policy.

Climate Parliament and UNDP have launched a joint project on parliamentary development and climate change. More details on the activities will soon be available on the AGORA Portal.

To find out more, visit www.climateparliament.org.



GLOBE recognises and seeks to strengthen the central role of legislators and parliaments in tackling the major global environmental challenges, as well as placing a much greater emphasis on the role of legislators in holding governments more effectively to account for the implementation of international commitments.

GLOBE's mission is to create a critical mass of legislators that can agree and advance common legislative responses to the major global sustainable development challenges.

To find out more, visit www.globeinternational.org.

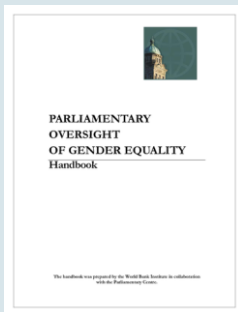


Interpeace – Constitution – making and Reform: Options for the Process (November 2011)

Since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, there has been a dramatic increase in constitution-making, in large part aimed at ending violent conflict or deep divisions. Yet constitution-makers and international constitutional-assistance actors have had little guidance or information about the process of making constitutions. No compilation of practical knowledge about the range of tasks and institutions that considered to form part of these process was available to those designing and reviewing constitutions.

This handbook attempts to fill that knowledge gap. Much of the knowledge required to prepare it was not available in the academic literature. To survey the range of options and experiences in constitution-making, we conducted workshops and interviews over a period of three years with more than 120 practitioners and academics from every region and from dozens of countries. This handbook is the culmination of that research.

[Click here to read more](#)



World Bank Institute and The Parliamentary Centre – Parliamentary Oversight of Gender Equality: Handbook (February 2012)

Gender equality is not only a democratic right, but a necessary pre-condition for sustainable development as it facilitates the utilization of all available resources in order to promote development. The marginalization of some groups on the basis of social roles implies inefficiency. Unless women and men have equal opportunities, capacities and voice, gender equality will not be achieved.

This handbook is designed to assist parliamentarians in carrying out their oversight role on gender by developing a better understanding of the concept, providing a summary of the budget cycle process, discussing gender budgeting, and examining the gender dimensions of parliamentary committees.

[Click here to read more](#)

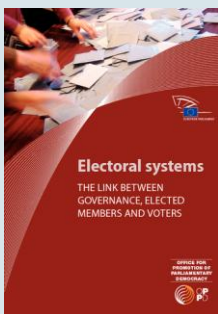


Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy – Constitutional Reform Processes and Political Parties: Principles for Practice (April 2012)

This publication provides a set of guiding principles for constitutional reform based on practical experiences of constitutional reform processes in a number of countries (Bolivia, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa).

While the primary focus of the publication is on the role of political parties in constitution-building processes, the publication is also of relevance to other actors involved in similar processes as it provides the reader with an overview of common phases, characteristics, challenges and guiding principles that may be customized to country specific contexts.

[Click here to read more](#)



European Parliament and the Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy (OPPD) - Electoral Systems: The Link Between Governance, Elected Members and Voters (October 2011)

This document is part of a new series of publications on issues in parliamentary practice from OPPD. As the European Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, the European Parliament has always been a staunch defender of these principles.

Through its standing committees, its inter-parliamentary delegations, its plenary resolutions, debates on human rights and its involvement in monitoring elections, the European Parliament has actively sought to give high priority to democratisation in all its external actions. This paper's objective is to provide an introduction to some of the core questions relating to electoral systems, to highlight some practical consequences of different systems and to present a brief overview of electoral systems in the European Union.

[Click here to read more](#)



Transparency International – GATEway: Corruption Assessment Toolbox (November 2011)

GATEway is a new project from Transparency International that aims to help users make sense of the various methods for measuring and analysing corruption. It allows civil society actors, researchers and government officials to compare the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches, and to select the most appropriate tools for their needs. To help users sort through this wealth of information, GATEway shines the spotlight on those tools that have the most potential for replication and adaptation. GATEway makes this all freely available through an easy-to-use website which includes a searchable database of around 300 (and counting) corruption assessment tools and a set of guides on the different approaches. For example, parliamentarians can use the GATEway's Political Corruption Assessments to identify and adapt to good parliamentary practices in political finance, among others.

[Click here to read more](#)



UNDP and Inter-Parliamentary Union (UPI) - Global Parliamentary Report: The Changing Nature of Parliamentary Representation (April 2012)

The focus of this first Global Parliamentary Report is the evolving relationship between citizens and parliaments. The intention is to analyse how citizens' expectations are changing, and how parliaments, politicians and parliamentary staff are responding.

The report uses the experience of institutions and individual politicians to illustrate the challenges and the variety of initiatives aimed at enhancing parliamentary representation in different parts of the world. It aims to help parliaments and politicians understand the pressures better, identify some of the tensions that they need to manage and provide examples of good practice which might offer insight, inspiration or emulation.

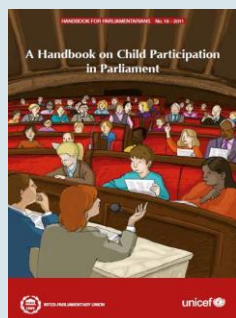
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National Democratic Institute (NDI) and World Bank Institute (WBI) - Strengthening Parliamentary Accountability, Citizen Engagement and Access to information: A Global Survey of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (September 2011)

Given the lack of research on PMOs, NDI and WBI undertook a joint project to identify PMOs worldwide and collect basic information regarding their activities, document good practices in parliamentary monitoring, and suggest recommendations for the international donor community regarding PMOs. To meet these objectives, the project conducted a survey of PMOs, analyzed their websites and other outputs, and interviewed a range of individuals at organizations involved in conducting or supporting parliamentary monitoring activities. This survey is the result of these efforts.

[Click here to read more](#)



UNICEF and Inter-Parliamentary Union- A Handbook on Child Participation in Parliament (September 2011)

Listening to children and allowing them to contribute to decision-making processes can lead to better decisions. It leads to policies that are actually – not just theoretically – in children's interests. It also offers children an opportunity to experience democratic decision-making and learn about their rights and powers as citizens, with long-term benefits for society as a whole.

The handbook aims to provide parliamentarians with information on a variety of effective mechanisms to ensure that children's participation in parliaments is meaningful, reflects the voices of the most marginalized and contributes to policies, laws and budgets that will help correct the disparities and inequities that afflict the world's children.

[Click here to read more](#)

International IDEA - Political Finance Database (March 2012)

The International IDEA political finance database contains information on political finance control provisions in more than 175 countries around the world, making it the largest collection of such information. The information in this database shows the use of different types of regulations in individual countries, but it can also be used to compare the prevalence of various provisions between countries and regions. This database can be used by all who are interested in how the role of money in politics is regulated, be they legislators, regulators, political party officials, civil society activists, journalists or concerned citizens.

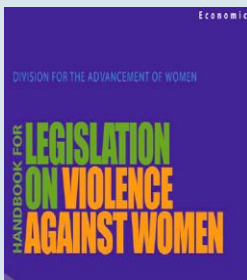
The original IDEA database was created in 2003, and has since become the leading source of information on political finance regulation worldwide.

[Click here to read more](#)

4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness - Declaration of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (December 2011)

After extended negotiations, 18 delegates elected to represent a wide group of stakeholders reached an agreement on the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. This declaration establishes an agreed framework for development cooperation that embraces traditional donors, South – South cooperators, the BRICSs, CSOs and private funders. The Forum also adopted a statement in which participants unequivocally asserted that parliaments should be recognized as key State institutions involved in the aid process. This statement sets out elements of a roadmap for parliaments to accelerate and deepen the implementation of existing commitments, particularly by demanding a stronger oversight capacity as well as supporting local governments to enable them to assume a more accountable role in aid effectiveness.

[Click here to read more](#)

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women (November 2011)

Comprehensive legislation is fundamental for an effective and coordinated response to violence against women. States have clear obligations under international law to enact, implement and monitor legislation addressing all forms of violence against women.

This Handbook intends to provide all stakeholders with detailed guidance to support the adoption and effective implementation of legislation which prevents violence against women, punishes perpetrators, and ensures the rights of survivors everywhere. It is specifically hoped that the Handbook will be of use to government officials, parliamentarians, civil society, staff of United Nations entities and other actors in their efforts at ensuring that a solid legal basis is in place for tackling the scourge of violence against women.

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Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy (OPPD) – Benchmarking for Parliaments: Self-assessment or minimum criteria (September 2011)

Although there is no authoritative definition of democracy that claims to include all possible components of democracy, there is an international consensus on the essential elements which define it. Effective parliaments are essential for strong and stable democracies but powers and functions of parliaments vary significantly, and achieving consensus on what a democratic parliament actually is has proved difficult. In recent years, a debate has begun on the potential benefit of an internationally agreed system of parliamentary benchmarking.

This publication provides an overview of different approaches ranging from highlighting the self-assessment aspect to establishing minimum criteria. It also offers some practical examples whilst distinguishing between emerging parliaments, developing parliaments and mature institutions.

[Click here to read more](#)

Africa i-Parliaments: Special Report



Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan is an Africa-wide initiative to empower African Parliaments to better fulfil their democratic functions by supporting their efforts to become open, participatory, knowledge-based and learning organisations, implemented by the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA).

It builds on the experiences, lessons learned, and tools developed during the implementation of the initiative “Strengthening Parliaments’ Information Systems in Africa” and focuses its activities on the following regional initiatives:

Bungeni Parliamentary and Legislative Information System: a suite of open source applications meant to improve the efficiency and efficacy of parliamentary processes.

Akoma Ntoso: a set of simple, technology-neutral XML machine-readable descriptions of parliamentary and legislative documents to support the creation of high-value legislative information services.



Bungeni Parliamentary and Legislative Information System is a suite of open source applications meant to improve the efficiency and efficacy of Parliamentary processes and systems, and reduce the cost and time of information dissemination, by allowing efficient management and publishing of parliamentary documents in different formats and on different media. Bungeni aims to make Parliaments more open and accessible to citizens, virtually allowing them “inside parliament”, or “bungeni” in the Swahili language of East Africa. It covers the entire document life-cycle of parliamentary documents (question, motion, bill, tabled documents, etc.) from the creation by a Member of Parliament through to the revision process and publication. It seamlessly



UN(DESA)



Africa i-Parliaments

open, participatory & knowledge based parliaments

integrates work-flow with the publishing of documents on the website, providing software tools that expedite the production of daily agenda or weekly programmes as well as support submission and management of amendments. Bungeni aims to improve information management in parliaments, whilst also providing citizens with easy and effective access to parliamentary works and activities. It aims to ensure that citizen participation is facilitated by making it easy for the citizens to access information and scrutinise parliamentary activities. It does so by providing access to all parliamentary documents (bills, questions, etc.), their history, the portion of the debates where they may have been discussed, related documents etc. all directly from the page of a specific document as well as the full record of debates in the parliaments and so on. Moreover it is possible to download information in different formats, from PDF to OTD and RFT, but also subscribe to RSS feeds that provide updates on the life-cycle of a specific document or type of documents, and access an XML copy of documents for any re-use that citizens, civil society or other organisation may wish to do.

Bungeni facilitates and broadens access to parliamentary works by opening up new channels for communication to encourage involvement by people who, due to their being located far from parliament or unable to participate via traditional means like meetings, political parties etc. They now have the opportunity to use new technologies to make their voices heard and this deepens the dialogue between citizens and their representatives on issues that concern them.

Bungeni is based on open source software that allows parliaments to achieve long-term ownership of the solution and exercise a higher degree of control over issues like support, maintenance, software obsolescence and future development. It is web-based so that it can be accessed through many devices (from PC to mobile phones and tablets) and independently from their operating systems. Its use of open standards allows for easy exchange and aggregation of parliamentary information and reduces the time required to make the information accessible via different electronic publishing media. This allows for greater public access to information since the information is stored in non-proprietary formats. The system supports multiple languages so that it can be localised to meet the requirements of the different parliaments, allow users to access the system in different languages and have access to multi-lingual content, for parliaments with more than one official language or those that may want to have some of their content in other languages.

The Open Source Software development model used by the project creates synergies in the delivery of sustainable foundations to deal with paucity of resources which has been one of the main reasons for the digital gap that exist in most African Parliaments. It is built on sharing and creating synergies that maximise sustainability of the deployed information systems since big or small, rich or not, parliament will have access to the same high quality platform of applications that can then be localised to the specific requirement of each parliament.

The development of the first production-version of Bungeni is now at an advanced stage and plans for deployment are being finalised with Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius and Zambia, while several other parliaments, not just in Africa, have expressed their interest in deploying it in both Central and South America and Asia. For more information contact info@parliaments.info or go to www.bungeni.org

The Bungeni Parliamentary information System suite of applications improves:

- ***accessibility*** to information within parliament and for citizens by providing rich search and reference functionalities;
- ***accountability*** of parliamentary work by proving audited timelines of all documents produced in parliament;
- ***efficiency*** of information publication by reducing the current delay from the point of information creation to information publication by implementing process workflows to allow publication of parliamentary documents directly to a parliamentary website.



Akoma Ntoso: a set of simple, technology-neutral XML machine-readable descriptions of parliamentary, legislative and judiciary documents that make the structural and semantic components of digital parliamentary documents accessible, supporting the creation of high-value parliamentary and legislative information services that greatly improve efficiency and accountability in the parliamentary institutions. Akoma Ntoso, "linked hearts" symbol of understanding and agreement for Akan people of West Africa, provides explicit support for three different document classes: legislative documents (bills and acts), debate documents (reports, debate records, minutes) and judgement documents (judgements), plus one generic document format for every other need and other non-specialized documents, called doc.

Akoma Ntoso creates a "lingua franca" for the interchange of

parliamentary, legislative and judiciary documents between institutions, a common data and metadata model, common mechanisms for resource naming and linking so that data in Parliament/Court X is easily accessed by Parliament/Court Y and information retrieval tools and techniques used in Parliament/Court X can be also be used in Parliament/Court Y. Having a common standard among public institutions also makes it possible to build software applications to manipulate parliamentary and legal documents in terms of their structure and semantic context rather than simply as plain undifferentiated text. Such contextual access to legislative information makes it easier to use ICT technologies to assist institutions and citizens to become more involved in the legislative process and make public institutions more

accountable.

Akoma Ntoso has been considered “best practice” by the Senate of Brazil and based on it they have developed their own schema. It has also been adopted by the European Parliament for assessing its legislative documents. The project has granted to OASIS the IPR early in 2012, allowing the setting up of the LegalDocumentML Technical Committee (TC) to handle the standardisation of Akoma Ntoso.

The Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan facilitates and broadens access to parliamentary works by opening up new channels for communication to encourage involvement by people who are unable to participate via traditional means.

The Akoma Ntoso framework has been designed to meet the following strategic goals:

- ***create a common legal document standard for the interchange of parliamentary, legislative and judiciary documents among institutions and countries;***
- ***provide a format for long term storage of and access to parliamentary, legislative and judiciary documents allowing search, interpretation and visualization of documents;***
- ***develop a common data and metadata model so that experiences, expertise, and tools can be shared and extended by the participating institutions;***
- ***create a common mechanism for naming and linking resources (URI) so that documents produced by Parliaments and Courts can be easily cited and cross-referenced by other institutions or individual users;***
- ***be self-explanatory, that is to be able to provide any information for its use and meaning through a simple examination of schema or example documents, without the aid of specialized software;***
- ***be extensible, that is it to allow modifications to the models within the Akoma Ntoso framework so that local customisation can be achieved without sacrificing interoperability with other systems.***

This process of standardisation of Akoma Ntoso will allow adopters and users to develop and produce an environment of software tools specifically for Akoma Ntoso (e.g. editors, web services, open data set, etc.). It will also increase the interest of the industry sector and allow Parliaments to make long-term investment plans on the standard with a reasonable return of benefits.

Several parliaments have already joined OASIS LegalDocumentML Technical Committee and several others are in the process to join it, to have the opportunity to participate in the definition of the XML standard for parliamentary and legislative documents.

The technical staff is currently developing a modularisation of the full Akoma Ntoso language aimed at extracting sub-schemas focused on particular types of documents. You can find more info on Akoma Ntoso here:

<http://www.akomantoso.org/>.



**Pakistan – India
Parliamentary
Dialogues Begin**
17 January, 2012

PAKISTAN: A 15 member Indian delegation shuttled to Pakistan to participate in the third round of Pakistan – India Parliamentarians Dialogue.

The two-day dialogue began on Tuesday, 17 January in Islamabad, where parliamentarians of both sides interacted on the broad theme of trade and economic relations.

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**Somali Leaders Agree
on New Parliament**
20 February, 2012

SOMALIA: Somalia's disparate leaders have agreed on the basic structure of a new parliament and government to replace the fragile transitional body that has failed to bring peace to the war-torn country. Signed under UN auspices, the accord proposes a parliamentary system for Somalia, with both Puntland and Galmudug recognized as states within a federal system.

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**Parliamentary
Committee
to Write First Fully
Civilian Constitution**

30 April, 2012

TURKEY: A parliamentary committee in Turkey is due to start work on the country's first fully civilian constitution. The aim is to draft a simpler and more democratic charter replacing the existing constitution, which was drawn up under military rule 30 years ago. It gave great powers to the military, curbed individual rights, and largely ignored the country's minorities.

The new draft is expected to be complete by the end of the year.

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**The Current Status
of Constitution
Making in Tunisia**
10 June, 2012

TUNISIA: According to Parliament Speaker Mustafa Ben Jaafar, Tunisia's new constitution will be ready by October 23. The news eases concerns about the pace of democratic transition in Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring. Tunisian officials have promised the parliamentary election will take place between March and June 2013.

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**South African
Parliament to
Create More
Transparency**
15 June, 2012

SOUTH AFRICA: Parliament in South Africa is looking at creating a new model that will allow the public to have more say in parliamentary processes, and will also create rules around MPs missing National Assembly sessions. Presenting Parliament's budget vote speech, National Assembly Speaker Max Sisulu said a task team of the Joint Rules Committee would look at how to boost public participation.

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**Egypt , Parliament
and the SCAF**
25 June, 2012

EGYPT: While the Egyptian people have elected Mohamaed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has cut down the democratically elected parliament and stripped it off many of the powers a parliament should hold.

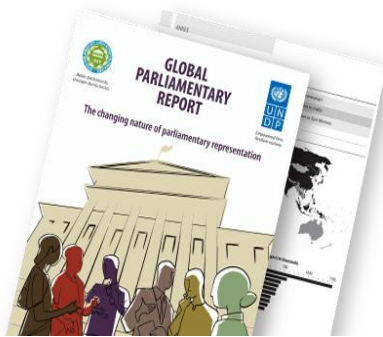
The SCAF is insisting that it is protecting Egypt from a descent into crisis, but the army has legalised their near-exclusive powers for years to come and left the country with neither a constitution nor a parliament.

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Global Parliamentary Report:

Special Feature:

What do citizens expect from their elected representatives? How can parliaments make progress in their outreach policies and consultative practices, in order to be more transparent and interact better with the people? What are, in these areas, the best practices and emerging trends which could inspire ambitious parliamentary reforms around the world, in order to make parliaments more representative and effective? The first ever Global Parliamentary Report, jointly produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), seeks responses to these strategic questions, reflecting the huge diversity of parliamentary practices from one region to another.



The report was officially launched on 2 April 2012 in Uganda, during the 126th Assembly of the IPU to which 650 parliamentarians attended.

Key speakers and participants at the global launch of the report included Rebeca Grynspan, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Associate Administrator, Honorable Abdelwahed Radi, President of the IPU, Mr. Anders Johnsson, Secretary-General of the IPU, Honorable Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, and the lead author of the report, Mr. Greg Power.



UNDP and IPU are also liaising with parliaments willing to organize national events to promote the report, for instance through parliamentary debates or round table¹.

The report, which results from more than a year of research under the guidance of a dedicated Advisory Board (11 high-level parliamentarians and experts), analyses the evolution of relations between parliaments and citizens, especially how legislatures need to adapt their functioning to growing expectations of the people regarding their representative function. The events of the Arab Spring have already shown that the people, when fighting for democratic rights, spontaneously ignore rubber-stamp parliaments, because they realize how disconnected they are from civil society and know such legislatures do not allow them to really influence political choices. Therefore it is vital for all parliaments to evolve, whatever the constitutional constraints, in order to remain aware of the aspiration of the people on the ground, and take it into account in their activity.

Thus, free and fair elections are crucial, but not enough to ensure parliaments are democratic institutions: once elected, parliamentarians need, when passing legislation or holding the

¹ A parliamentary debate, supported by UNDP and the IPU, was organized on the report by the National Assembly of Ecuador on 18 April, and by the Parliament of Bangladesh on 26 May.

government to account, to inform citizens and discuss their choices with their constituents. This is also a way to make parliamentary work more effective: as the UNDP Associate Administrator stressed at the global launch of the report:

“Parliamentarians are better placed to assess the concrete outcome of the legislation they discuss, amend and pass when they engage with citizens”.

The report also notices that pressure from the people for more transparency and participation is higher than ever in the history of parliaments. This results from a broad spectrum of causes, including, among others, intensive use of new technologies (allowing direct and quick exchanges between parliamentarians and citizens), the establishment of codes of conduct and term limits, the emergence of parliamentary Monitoring organisations, and the development of constituency work.

The report does not promote any particular parliamentary system, but reflects interesting experiences and innovative practices or reforms, which appear to be successful in various regions of the world to better inform and consult citizens. Thanks to face-to-face interviews conducted with 663 parliamentarians and inputs provided by 129 national parliaments, the report also includes an Annex analysing how parliamentarians see their own role, and capturing substantive data on key characteristics of parliaments (such as the proportion of women in parliaments, the average age of parliamentarians, parliament budgets per population size, number of parliamentary staff, or number of sessions and standing committees).

The Global Parliamentary Report, which is available in English, French and Spanish (and will be very soon in Arabic), is first

targeted at parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and parliamentary development experts. Indeed, many of its recommendations could be useful to parliamentary experts and practitioners when providing advice and support to parliaments, in order to make them more representative and, through enhanced exchanges with citizens, improve the effectiveness of their lawmaking and oversight activities. However, the report can also be a rich source of information for researchers (for instance in political science) and, more broadly, for citizens willing to learn more about parliaments and better understand their work.

The report is easy to access on the UNDP, IPU and Agora websites², which is an invitation to disseminate it broadly to all people who might have an interest in using it to know more about parliaments and, hopefully, inspire strategic reforms to enhance their democratic effectiveness, which remains a key objective to UNDP.



² www.undp.org/governance ; <http://www.ipu.org/gpr> ; www.agora-parl.org/globalparliamentaryreport



06 – 07 July 2012: The Law Factory – Open Legislative Data Conference (Paris, France)

In early July, the Law Factory will host the Open Legislative Data Conference. The term open legislative data is an amalgam of open data, the idea that certain data should be freely available, and legislative studies, the academic study of parliaments and legislators. This conference is an effort to bring practitioners of both worlds together.

The conference will discuss the latest developments regarding parliamentary informatics, like parliamentary open data, computer analysis of parliamentary activities, and e-parliament. By convening two groups that do not communicate often – the academic world of legislative studies with individuals and organizations from across open data and parliamentary informatics spectrum – the Law Factory hopes to create a constructive, consensus-building dialogue.

For more information, [click here](#)



09 – 14 July 2012: Transparency International – Transparency International Summer School on Integrity (Vilnius, Lithuania)

The Transparency International Summer School on Integrity is the first academic programme in the former Soviet Union to tackle the issue of corruption in the public and private sectors.

The Summer School aims to provide student leaders with an opportunity to learn from professionals in the anti-corruption field. The School features three teaching modules in English for students, graduates and young professionals, with a specific interest in the causes of corruption and practical ways in which societies can become more accountable. The public sector module will focus on abuse of office and nepotism that occur in parliament and within the executive. The School will also discuss relevant accountability mechanisms for public institutions.

For more information, [click here](#)



11 July 2012: European Parliament Former Members Association (FMA), United States Association of Former Members and the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians – Launch of the Global Democracy Initiative (Washington, D.C., USA)

On 11 July 2012 in Washington, the FMA, the United States Association of Former Members of Congress and the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians will officially launch the Global Democracy Initiative (GDI).

GDI will organise, train, and deploy Former Parliamentarians and Legislators as facilitators of all kinds of democracy building activities including as observers of the election and referendum process of nations which are seeking to create or improve their own democratic institutions, government of laws, fair and transparent election processes, the building of Legislative Institutions and the development of vibrant Political Party structures.

For more information, [click here](#)



05 – 10 August 2012: Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)– 12th General Assembly Meeting and 11th Annual Meeting of Women Parliamentarians of America (Asunción, Paraguay)

COPA is an organization that brings together the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and the inter-parliamentary organizations of the Americas.

There are six permanent thematic committees, which focus on areas of democracy, economy, education, health, environment, and human rights. During the General Assembly, each committee meets and creates recommendations and resolutions for the wider General Assembly. Held at the same time is the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians of America, which brings together the women members of parliamentary assemblies of state, regional, and inter-parliamentary organizations to discuss women's issues.

For more information, [click here](#)



8 August – 10 August 2012 : Parliament of Finland IFLA – Call for Papers: World Library and Information Congress (Helsinki, Finland)

During the World Library and Information Congress 2012, the IFLA Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section will invite proposals for presentations at the Section's pre-conference programme in Helsinki, 8-10 August 2012. The main theme of the Helsinki pre-conference is Parliamentary Libraries - Empowering Parliaments and Citizens.

This part of the pre-conference will focus on how parliamentary libraries empower their clients: parliamentarians and citizens. Papers sharing inspiring and surprising ideas and initiatives will be especially welcome. The papers will be presented as part of what we hope will be an interactive session that will enable all those present to share ideas and learn from each other.

For more information, [click here](#)



04 – 10 November 2012: Transparency International – International Anti-Corruption Conference 2012 (Brasília, Brazil)

With the theme, "Mobilising People: Connecting Agents of Change" the 15th edition of the biennial International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) will be held in Brasília, Brazil from 7 - 10 November 2012. Since 1983, the conference series has served as the leading independent global platform for people who want to limit the damaging impact of corruption on governance, the economy, the environment and most importantly on people's everyday lives, especially the most vulnerable. The Conference has remained a pertinent place for the cross-fertilization of ideas, from the private sector to the public, from parliamentarians to civil society, on ways to curb corruption in each sector of society.

For more information, [click here](#)